

A

1508/94.

# DISCOURSE,

ON THE

EXCELLENCY,

OF THE

*British Constitution ;*

And the Blessings this Country has so long experienced, in consequence of its present Form of Government ; which has stimulated the Ingenuity of its Inhabitants, to the Improvement of those natural Advantages, Historians have boasted of, as being peculiar to this happy Island.

By Lord Burgham in 1794  
Ascribed to Burgham

BODEN, Printer, STAFFORD.

1792.

Ascribed to Burgham

concluded  
ascribed to



24 Chap. Proverbs. 21. Verse.

*My Son, fear thou the Lord, and the King, and meddle not with them that are given to change.*

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**B**EFORE the World was enlightened, and Man had a rational idea of the Supreme Being, the Maker, Preserver, and Governor of the World ; from ignorance, and want of improvement of the mental faculties, it could not be expected to find in such a People, the fear of God, whom they were unacquainted with, or obedience to any earthly System of Government, which they knew not of. But as soon as it pleased the Almighty to draw aside this Cloud of Darkness, and let Man into a knowledge of his *Divinity* ; the fear of the Lord became the first *Law of Nature*, and all Nations that prospered, kneeled before *Him* : and under *Him*, earthly Governors were constituted, to attend to the execution of those institutions, which were by  
degrees

degrees established, to preserve the R I G H T S of M A N : such as security of person, property, and peace to the Community in general. As the World advanced in Years, the People increased in knowledge. The constant improvement in Arts, Manufactures, Trade and Science, produced the necessity of various regulations in States, (till such time unnecessary) which in later days, according to the disposition, and interests of several Nations, and Climates, were nearly reduced to *Three*.

\* D E M O C R A C Y ; where the Sovereign Power is lodged in an aggregate Assembly, consisting of all the Members of a Community.

A R I S T O C R A C Y ; when it is lodged in a Council of select Members, of the best rank, and ability. And

M O N A R C H Y ; when it is intrusted in the hands of a single Person.

Y o u





You are all sensible when a Society is once formed, some Government must be submitted to, as necessary to preserve, and to keep that Society in order, some Superior constituted, whose commands and decisions, all the Members are bound to obey; otherwise they would still remain as in a state of nature, without any Judge upon earth to define their several Rights, and redress their several Wrongs.

It may be asked, to whose hands the reins of Government are to be entrusted? The answer is easy, as all will agree; It should be reposed in such persons in whom the highest perfection of wisdom, of goodness, and of power is found. Attributes, which in the summit of perfection are alone in the Supreme Governor of the *Universe*, and in no one here below.

For the nature of Man in his present state, is imperfect, and there is a propensity to Vice, or a corrupt principle more or less disposing him to  
evil,

evil, which the most liberal education cannot so wholly controul, but that some seed of deformity will remain in the Mind, the growth of which is productive of mischievous passions: Thereby no one singly under such infirmities can be thought strictly qualified to be entrusted with the sole and full power of the Government of a Kingdom.

If composed of the people at large; the Assembly is too mixed and numerous, for sober consultation, temperate debate, and the execution of the result of those deliberations; and in case of difficulty, they have no power to fly to, to relieve their distress.

IN *Aristocracies* there is more wisdom to be expected, as it is generally (or intended to be) composed of the most learned and experienced Citizens. But in this (where the right of making Laws, and the whole power of the State resides) there may be an overbearing exercise of their uncontrollable power, so as to urge them on to Acts of oppression and tyranny.

THE

THE same dangers attend a *Monarchy*, where it is absolute and unlimited. As it is the most powerful of any, no one is fit to be trusted with such a power, but the *Supreme Governor* of the *Universe* from whose complete Wisdom, Order, and Regularity, our earthly blessings flow.

THE *World* has often suffered great afflictions, from imperfect *Monarchs*.

THE Bible, as well as other Histories, relate variety of instances, of the most unwarrantable cruelties of licentious Tyrants. Witness the Herods in the East. At Rome; *Caligula*, the *Nero's* and *Domitian*; with a long catalogue of many more, Who born and educated to a Throne, had not the plea of ignorance, which some of meaner birth might think excuse sufficient for bad actions. These, without remorse indulged their lustful appetites, to reign triumphant over *Reason*, to the destruction of the People, who looked up to them, as their Parents and Protectors.

HAVING

HAVING traced the three forms of Government separately, with some observations on their imperfections ; I come now to the BRITISH CONSTITUTION, which consists of the three united : A Constitution which has long remained, and it may justly be expected, from the knowledge and love, the bulk of the people have of it, It will long continue.

“ † For, as with us, the executive power of  
 “ the Laws is lodged in a single Person, they have  
 “ all the advantage of strength and dispatch, that  
 “ are to be found in the most absolute Monarchy;  
 “ and as the legislature of the Kingdom is en-  
 “ trusted to three distinct powers, entirely inde-  
 “ pendent of each other, 1st. the King ; 2d. the  
 “ Lords, spiritual and temporal, ( which is an  
 “ aristocratical Assembly, ) selected for their  
 “ Piety, their Birth, their Wisdom, their Valor,  
 “ or their Property ; and 3d. the House of  
 “ Commons, freely chosen by the People, from  
 “ among

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† Blackstone, Vol. 1. Page 50.



“among themselves ; which makes it a kind of  
 “ *Democracy*. As this aggregate Body, actuated  
 “ by different Springs, and attentive to different  
 “ Interests, composes the BRITISH PARLIAMENT,  
 “ and has the supreme disposal of every thing,  
 “ there can be no inconvenience attempted, by  
 “ any of the *three branches*, but will be withstood  
 “ by *One* of the other *Two* ; each branch being  
 “ armed with a negative power, sufficient to  
 “ repel any innovation, which it shall think in-  
 “ expedient, or dangerous.”

In these, the Sovereignty of the British Con-  
 stitution is lodged ; and lodged as beneficially as  
 possible, for the Strength, Peace, and Prosperity  
 of Society ; and has continued in its present form  
 from the Reign of K. *John*, in the Year 1215, to  
 this time ; comprehending a space of 576 Years ;  
 which confutes Tacitus's opinion ; who treats this  
 notion of a mixed Government, as a visionary  
 whim ; and one, that if effected, could never be  
 lasting or secure.

And a still further proof of its excellency, is the great power it has shewn, in vanquishing every attempt to overturn it, in Reigns less favorable to moderation, antecedent to that glorious Æra of the Revolution in 1688, which stamped its excellency, and confirmed the laws and liberty of this Country, upon the solid foundation they now stand.

If what has been here delivered, is a true picture of the Government of this Country, and I think no one can dispute it, as it is given to you from an authority, which is consented to, by the ablest Judges of the Land ; it behoves those, who are wise enough to be sensible of its benefits, *to meddle not with them, who are given to change.*

For the most part, *such* are Men of ruined fortunes, of dissolute lives, and abandoned principles, and therefore are ready for any Mischief ; not caring what becomes of the great Ship, provided they think they can save themselves, in the Cock-boat of their own fortunes.

OTHERS

OTHERS again, of consummate pride and vanity, are anxious to be talked of in the World, as Philosophers, and Men of superior talents, which they advertise, by abandoning the establishment they find in Church and State, and strike out novelties of their own, which give them a kind of consequence, and too often impose upon the restless, weak, and unthinking.

WHEN they find themselves thus surrounded by a numerous tribe of Converts, they become proud of their consequence, and either wilfully, or from the intoxication of their success, are blind to the mischief they are creating, by disturbing the peace of many families, who before lived content under the wholesome laws, and constitution of this envied Country.

AGAIN, Ambition has always its votaries, who are upon the Watch for that assistance, which may advance them in their views ; and this is generally to be found in these Schools of Discontent ;

for the Mind of Man being once set afloat, and dissatisfied, is more apt to listen to the new Doctrines it has adopted, than return to the old ones it has discarded.

If they contain complaints against all, or any parts of the Government, or even against Majesty itself; Such a one being prepared for revolt, flies to the standard of him, who means nothing more, than his own exaltation, though to the great Body of the State, ruin ensues.

THE frailty of nature having been considered, and the imperfections (in consequence of the defects in Man) that necessarily attend every single species of Government; it may without presumption, and with the greatest truth asserted, that the *British Constitution*, composed of the *Three*, united in *One*, is the best, and least liable to dangerous, and essential abuses, of any that this World has yet afforded, for the comfort and happiness of a People.

AND



AND *Montesquieu* says, " There exists no where  
 " a constitution, better adapted than that of *Eng-*  
 " *land*, for a powerful Society, in which all the  
 " Individuals are to partake of Freedom."

IN short, the excellency of this Country, as  
 well in natural, as acquired advantages, over  
 others, has been the Subject of Praise, by many  
 writers, both ancient and modern; who have  
 pronounced her happy, above all other countries:  
 Whom nature has enriched with all the Blessings  
 of Heaven and Earth: And as an Historian ex-  
 presses it; \* " Whose vallies are like *Eden*; whose  
 " Hills are as *Lebanon*; whose Springs are as  
 " *Pisga*; whose Rivers are as *Jordan*; whose Wall  
 " is the *Ocean*; and whose defence is the Lord  
 " *Jehovah*."

WHOM we are bound in duty and gratitude,  
 to praise and adore, for such his transcendant  
 goodness, and pray that We may *Individually* and  
 as a *People* deserve the continuance of his blef-  
 sings; thro' the mediation and merits of our  
 Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To whom, &c.

